



# The Human Touch

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TOGETHER WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## Lisa-Michele Church Becomes DHS Director Feb. 15

**By Carol Sisco**  
**DHS Public Information**

Lisa-Michele Church will approach her new job as a problem-solver who enjoys dealing with complex issues that affect people's lives.

"Employees should know I'm a problem solver, I have high expectations and I'm fair," the new Human Services executive director said in an interview. "I'm very interested in learning what our employees do and in getting to know them."

And don't be surprised if the former newspaper reporter also asks everyone a million questions and jots down the answers after she starts work Feb. 15.

"My family is all afflicted with the disease of thinking we can write," Church said. "It began for me at the young age of 8 when I started a newspaper in my neighborhood with a manual typewriter. I reported on the activities of my cat and my family."

She eventually majored in political science, but Church also was a sports writer at Dixie College and later at the University of Utah. Although Church was born in Northern California, her ancestors arrived in St. George, Utah in 1861 and she moved there with her parents as a high school senior.

Church also worked for United Press International wire service where she covered the Joseph Paul Franklin murder trial, followed the story of Barney Clark receiving his artificial heart and wrote many court stories. She took a break from college between her junior and senior years to intern in Sen. Jake Garn's Washington D.C. press office. She later worked as his assistant press secretary for two years, thriving on the political atmosphere.



**New DHS Director Lisa-Michele Church**

Church returned to Utah and worked with Sen. Garn as a legislative aide for natural resource issues when wilderness battles were in full swing, mining reform was occurring and the first radiation compensation legislation was introduced.

"I loved being a reporter," she recalled. "But I needed to be in the fray where I could advocate and have more input over the way a case was handled." Church also realized women didn't have much chance on Capitol Hill without a graduate degree so she finished college and headed to law school.

During law school Church spent two years as a law clerk with the Bureau of Indian Affairs where she dealt with Indian welfare issues and also was involved in oil and gas leasing on reservations.

When Sinclair Oil moved their corporate office to Salt Lake City from Denver they wanted a staff lawyer. Church soon learned that Sinclair had resorts and hotels as well as the oil business. The

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## Lisa-Michele Church ...

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issues varied from environmental to employment discrimination and everything in between.

"The endless variety appealed to me," she said. "I wanted to be on the front lines right out of law school. I also had some great mentors who gave me plenty of opportunities."

Church loved the complexity of corporate law.

"I never heard the same question twice. There was always a new problem presenting itself in a new way. I like that," she said.

Church enjoyed being a behind-the-scenes strategist at Sinclair and building relationships with mid-level managers. She ultimately left and joined her husband David's private practice to spend more times with her sons.

"My kids were 8 and 11 then. I felt I'd been sold a bill of goods by everyone who said you should stay home with children when they're little and go to work when they get older," she said. "It was just the opposite for me. Right when my kids needed me the most I had to figure out how to be vice-president/general counsel and supervise several departments. It required traveling to different company locations in 20 western states. It just didn't work with my family. I needed to slow down and get a sense of my personal priorities."

Son Matt is now 17 and a high school junior. Sam, 14, is in the eighth grade. Both fully support their mom's demanding new role. They know she always has "a million things" going on anyway.

Besides working full time, Church is a community volunteer. She started at the Rape Crisis Center, now called the Rape Recovery Center, in 1985.

"I learned a lot about community and service issues there," she said. She also served as a board

member and president of the Women Lawyers of Utah.

"We did a lot of volunteer things for professional women and worked with legislators on children's issues and domestic violence," Church said. Later, she served on the Judicial Nominating Commission "which enabled me to see the kind of people drawn to judging." Juvenile Court judges Kimberly Hornak and Bob Yeates were among

those chosen during her term. She also was an ex officio member of the State Bar Commission and served on numerous bar committees.

"I am concerned that people don't often see lawyers as part of a helping profession," Church

said. "I was fortunate in that I had a good job so I could devote a lot of time to community service. It was as essential to me as my paying job."

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**Lisa-Michele Church**

## Crisis Counselors Needed

**By B.J. VanRoosendaal**  
**Substance Abuse & Mental Health**

World events continue to make emergency planning an urgent concern in Utah. An opportunity to volunteer and help in the event of an emergency will be available soon for mental health or substance abuse professionals or paraprofessionals.

Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health would like you to consider becoming a state certified crisis counselor. The Division held it's first statewide training conference last August on "Crisis Counseling For Disaster and Bio-terrorism Events." The successful initial training marked the beginning of training a significant group of professionals to assist in disaster crisis counseling.

Everyone is aware that Utah is prone to earthquakes, but no one could have guessed Salt

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## Senior Citizens Are Getting 'Connected' on Internet

**By Sheldon Elman**  
**Aging & Adult Services**

More than 1,000 seniors ventured to Salt Lake Community College's Redwood Road campus last fall to attend the Second Annual Senior Technology Showcase. Former Gov. Olene Walker and ex-DHS Director Robin Arnold-Williams encouraged them to get "connected" with family, friends, businesses and others via the expanding world of the Internet.

Being an active part of society is often difficult for people who aren't computer literate and for those without Internet access. Most television and radio news programs encourage listeners to "log on" to obtain additional information about news stories. Financial institutions encourage clients to use their computer-based automated systems, often offering an array of additional services as an inducement. Many airlines impose a surcharge if tickets aren't purchased via the Net. E-mail addresses are becoming as common as regular post office addresses.

What do you do if you don't know how to "log on?" Corporations such as AARP of Utah, Walgreen's Drug Stores, Totally Awesome Computers, Zion's Bank and 40 additional commercial, private, public and state and local government agencies worked together to provide answers.

The answer? Design and sponsor a Senior Technology Showcase to introduce computer technology to individuals 65 and older who are the fastest growing segment of Utah's population. The Showcase was a great success and gave attendees an opportunity to engage in learning experiences specifically tailored to them.

Seniors attended workshops on how to use computers during the two-day event. Topics included successful and safe Internet use to transact business, obtain information and use email to keep in touch with family, friends and the community. In addition, seniors took advanced computer

workshops related to genealogy research; storing, modifying, and repairing damaged digital photos, etc. Professionals selected because of their experience in senior friendly-teaching techniques conducted all workshops and programs. Multiple computers were available for practice. AARP Volunteers lent assistance when needed.

The Showcase also included a series of presentations specific to computer technology. They included a presentation by Dell Schanze, founder and owner of Totally Awesome Computers, on how to purchase a computer specific to your intended needs. Walgreen's Drug Stores sent a licensed pharmacist to introduce their free on-line pharmacy system that permits subscribers to refill prescriptions, obtain a report on medications they purchased during the year and, most importantly, ask questions about their medications.

Seniors took advantage of the chance to learn how computer technology can help them safely transact business, email family and friends and keep in touch with the expanding world of the Internet.

### Counselors Needed ...

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Lake City would be struck by a tornado in 1999. Events such as the tornado, and of course, 9/11, prompted state officials to rethink Utah's preparedness efforts. The need for more crisis counselors was recognized.

"The last training's success makes us confident that during an emergency we can improve the lives of people if we have more certified volunteers," said Robert Snarr who organized the crisis training.

The next training conference is being planned. Registration is free, and the Division hopes to have continuing education credit available. If you are interested in using your skills to help, call Snarr at (801) 538-3939.

Can you help? Utah, the Department of Human Services and the Division need you!



**Jen Ward is on her way to being a nurse**

## **Jen Ward is Becoming Independent at 18**

**By Pamela Russell, DCFS**

Jen Ward, 18, is one of the first teens to take advantage of a program designed to help young adults as they age out of foster care in Utah.

Numerous Utah groups are working hard to fill the void that accompanies young adults when they age out of foster care. Last year as part of former Gov. Olene Walker's "Walker Work Plan," the Transition to Adult Living (TAL) Implementation Team pulled together more than 60 private and public businesses and individuals to increase resources for youth.

A public/private support network was pulled together to help youth successfully move from foster care to adult living. Assistance includes assessment, mentoring, self-esteem building, personal future planning, caregiver and family networking, basic life-skills training, housing, leisure skills, education, employment, on-the-job training, information and referral, crisis support, medical, mental health and limited financial assistance. Education and Training Vouchers play an important role in this initiative and have been implemented statewide.

Jen, who aged out of foster care last year, attests to how the program directly impacted her life. She's a freshman at Weber State University and on her way to becoming a registered nurse.

"Having this educational help has been something I really appreciate since I didn't have a parent who could save for my college education," she told participants at a recent Transition to Adult Living meeting. "This has been kind of like I have a parent."

When asked if obtaining educational assistance funds was difficult, Jen replied, "it has been a little frustrating because the program is so new and people are learning how to implement it, but Mary Jane McGuire, an assistant caseworker, has been really helpful. Everyone found answers to my questions really fast. This program paid for my tuition, housing and books. I can worry more about my studies and not other things."

Jen believes it's imperative to let other youth know about the program and encourage them to use it.

"Anyway we can keep it up to help every kid will be important," she said. "I know kids who think they will be on welfare their whole life. Helping kids realize their dreams is important. I know I am thrilled about this money and my nursing program because I wouldn't be able to do it on my own. It helped me meet my dreams."

Six other youth who either aged out of foster care or were adopted after 16 are attending Weber State University, Salt Lake Community College, Snow College, Dixie State College, Tacoma Community College and the University of Utah.

A youth website is located at:  
[www.justforyouth.utah.gov](http://www.justforyouth.utah.gov)

### **The Human Touch**

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